

# Election 2024: Ald. Burke headed behind bars, but Burke's judges still rule the Cook County bench

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Cook County Judge Regina Scannichio (L) and former Chicago Alderman Ed Burke (R) | University of Illinois at Chicago/Wikipedia

By **LGIS News Service**  
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Ed Burke is going to federal prison for abusing his position as an alderman. But his most powerful role was never on the Chicago City Council.

For more than 40 years, Burke signed off on every would-be judge seeking office in Cook County, serving as chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party's judicial slating committee.

Now, Burke is gone. But "Burke's judges" still reign in Illinois' largest county, and many are again seeking retention in 2024.

In Burke's home sub-circuit, the 14th, judges Regina Ann Scannicchio and Maura Slattery-Boyle are seeking retention this November.

Cook County's 14th Judicial Subcircuit covers the city's near southwest side and Burke's old 14th Ward, including parts of Little Italy, Pilsen, Little Village, Bridgeport, McKinley Park, Back of the Yards, Brighton Park, Gage Park, Lawndale, the Town of Cicero and City of Berwyn, where Scannicchio grew up, attending Morton East High School.

Scannicchio (appointed 2012) and Slattery-Boyle (2000) were Burke recommendations in the 14th, which was created in 1991 but, due to Burke's influence, didn't have a competitive election until 2018.

That's when Frausto-Sandoval, an immigration attorney allied with U.S. Rep. Jesus "Chuy" Garcia (D-IL), defeated Burke-backed Marina Ammendola in the Democratic Primary, 58 percent to 42 percent. She is also seeking retention in 2024.

Slattery-Boyle is former prosecutor and criminal court judge who drew criticism in 2018 **as the county's most reversed judge on appeal**. She still won retention, winning 62.5 percent of the vote.

Scannicchio was named Acting Presiding Judge of the Domestic Relations Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County by Tim Evans in Sept. 2022, replacing Grace Dickler.

Also seeking retention is Judge James Shapiro, who it was revealed during Burke's trial, was part of an "investment club" with Burke other active and retired judges.

**Shapiro drew headlines in Aug. 2021** for stripping shared custody of an 11 year old boy because her mother hadn't taken a coronavirus shot.

Other Burke-backed judges have recently retired and are not seeking retention.

They include Judge Michael Toomin, who presided over Cook County's juvenile justice division and was a judge on the 15th Subcircuit and was also revealed to be part of Burke's investment club, retired on Dec. 31, 2022.

Cook County Judge Laura Sullivan, a former neighbor of Burke who was slated in 2001 and became a judge in 2002, won retention in Nov. 2020 but retired two years before the end of her term, on Dec. 31, 2022.

Burke took over judicial slating for the Cook County Democrats in the mid-1980s and held on to the role until Jan. 2019, when after he was federally charged, Cook County Democratic Party Chairman Toni Preckwinkle replaced him with Senate President Don Harmon.

In 1997, Chicago Sun-Times Columnist Mark Brown described Burke's role as "making" judges.

"Every lawyer in Cook County who hopes to get elected to a judgeship in 1998 with the Democratic Party's endorsement will seek the blessing of Ald. Edward M. Burke," Brown wrote.

"Anybody who has a candidate has to see Eddie," Brown quoted a 'Democratic insider' as telling him.

**Burke, 79, was found guilty in December of 13 counts**, including racketeering, bribery and extortion. He is scheduled to be sentenced on June 17, 2024.

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